

HOUSE RESOLUTION 151

By Shaw

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Jackson-Madison County Branch on the occasion of its Forty-Sixth Annual Freedom Fund Banquet, which celebrates this year's one hundredth anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly pause in its deliberations to honor and recognize those estimable organizations that, through the courageous efforts of their members, have helped to establish and protect civil and political rights for the people of this State; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy organization is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); on May 24, 2009, the Jackson-Madison County NAACP Branch will hold its Forty-Sixth Annual Freedom Fund Banquet at the Carl Perkins Civic Center, and

WHEREAS, at the banquet, branch members and guests will join with Co-Chairs Melvin Wright, Sr., and T. Robert Hill, Branch President Harrell C. Carter, Jr., and guest speaker Dr. David Dockery, President of Union University, in celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the national organization's founding, which occurred February 12, 1909; and

WHEREAS, because African Americans and other citizens were appalled at the horror of lynching, the violence of the 1908 race riots in Springfield, Illinois, home of Abraham Lincoln and capital of the state, as well as a host of other racial indignities and injustices, a call was issued for a meeting to discuss racial justice, and sixty people ultimately signed this call, which was released on the centennial of Lincoln's birth; and

WHEREAS, this seminal group included Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villard, William English Walling, Dr. Henry Moscowitz, W. E. B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, among others; and

WHEREAS, in those early days, the NAACP's stated goal was to secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution of the United States; today, the organization's principal objectives remain much the same: to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority group citizens of the U.S. and eliminate race prejudice; and

WHEREAS, driven by a strong emphasis on local organizing, the NAACP had by 1913 established branch offices in such cities as Boston, Baltimore, Kansas City, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, early in its history, the NAACP developed an important strategy for achieving its aims: legal advocacy; in the 1910 case *Guinn v. Oklahoma* for instance, the NAACP successfully defeated a discriminatory voting law established in Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, during its 1915 campaign against D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, a highly inflammatory film that brutally reinforced the prevailing racial stereotypes of the early twentieth century, the NAACP learned to craft and deploy publicity to sway public opinion and further the cause of racial equality; and

WHEREAS, in the 1950s, the NAACP's legal advocacy efforts bore much fruit; the organization's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, headed by Thurgood Marshall, a soon-to-be Justice of the United States Supreme Court, helped fight the battle for integration in *Brown v. Board of Education* and won a resounding victory for the public education of all Americans in 1954; and

WHEREAS, at the NAACP Washington, D.C., Bureau, lobbyist Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr., helped integrate the U.S. Armed Forces in the late 1940s, and he was also instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964, and 1968, as well as the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, the mission of the NAACP, to secure the full promise of democracy for all Americans, was echoed across the country in the actions and words of

countless civil rights activists, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his fellow members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and

WHEREAS, despite these enormous achievements, the plight of American minorities, especially the members of the African-American minority, seemed to grow even darker at times; Florida Field Secretary Harry T. Moore and his wife were murdered in 1951, while Mississippi Field Secretary Medgar Evers was murdered in 1962, all assassinated by those who would maintain the legacy of Jim Crow by any means necessary; and

WHEREAS, while this sort of violence has diminished significantly over the years, economic, social, and political disparities between the various racial and ethnic groups that comprise the American people persist to this day; fortunately, the good men and women of the NAACP remain inspired as they fight for the rights and privileges these groups deserve; and

WHEREAS, through its tireless advocacy on behalf of American minorities, the NAACP has helped this nation grow toward the maturity of a truly just and equitable democracy, and as this venerable organization enters its second century, the people of this State, and the great nation of which it is a part, should recognize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for all it has accomplished and for all it aims to achieve in the future; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and recognize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Jackson Madison County Branch on the occasion of its Forty-Sixth Annual Freedom Fund Banquet, which celebrates this year's one hundredth anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and wish its members much continued success as they continue the NAACP's quest for equality under the law for all Americans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.